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THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF GEORGE FOX

1624—1924

By RUFUS M. JONES

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1624–1924

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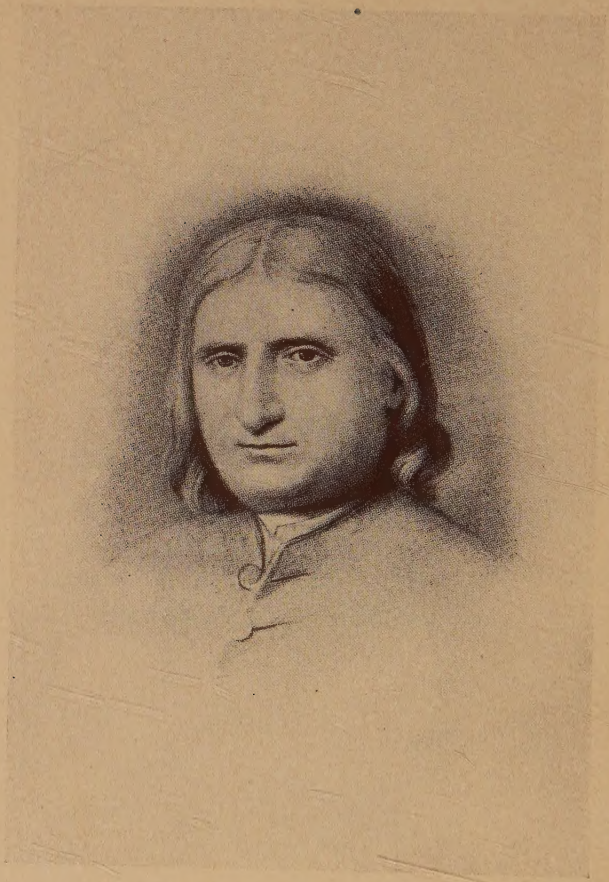

George Fox

THE LIFE AND MESSAGE OF GEORGE FOX 1624–1924

A TERCENTENARY ADDRESS

BY

RUFUS M. JONES

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TIME with its perspectives foreshortens most religious leaders. Personality is not easily transmissible, the magnetism of presence cannot last. Ideas, too, are fragile things and often collapse under the pressure of the years. Contemporary judgments carry no finality. Only the stern sifting of the centuries can decide upon the measure of a man's real greatness, only the votes of many generations can give a sure verdict. George Fox has successfully lived out three centuries and is still a growing name. He is at this moment a more quick and vital influence than at any other time since his death at Henry Goldney's house in London in 1691. What he proclaimed as *truth* is still a live and kindling force. The way of life upon which he ventured still attracts serious souls. He is regarded more and more with the flow of time as a major prophet. We know his flaws and weaknesses more clearly than his first followers did but at the same time we can see the true greatness of the man and the significance of his spiritual con-

tribution in fuller light than they could then. When his earthly life came to its close only the members of his fellowship lamented his death, the world at large hardly noted his going; now, on his tercentenary, all types of Christians of all communions are interested in his life and message, while multitudes who do not choose to be of his Society nevertheless appreciate the heroic endeavors he made to free men from the weight of tradition and from the heavy oppression of senseless customs.

George Fox was born the same year that his greatest immediate spiritual forerunner, Jacob Boehme, died. With all their differences they were strangely alike. They were both unschooled and yet both possessed penetrating and discriminating minds. They both lived much alone in the fields and woods, reading, seeking, thinking, meditating, finding. They both had similar psychological constitutions. They both had sudden illuminating experiences of divine invasion and they both were transformed physically and mentally by their new-found organizing faith. They both revolted from the theological systems and the ecclesiastical structure that had been inherited from the Reformation and both developed a simple, direct, vital, inward way of salvation and the simplest possible form of religious fellowship. They both

endured merciless persecution and both grew finer in spirit and richer in life through what they suffered. Boehme was no doubt directly influenced by the earlier mystics; Fox was plainly indirectly influenced by Boehme, though the English youth probably knew the Silesian mystic's writings only slightly and had little consciousness of connection with him. They were in any case kindred in spirit, of the same household of faith, members in one mystic fellowship, and the torch that fell at Görlitz in 1624 was caught up again and firmly held aloft by the man who was born in that same year in Fenny Drayton.

A strange child, different from ordinary children, was this little boy, born "in the month called July," and christened in the near-by parish church, George Fox. "In my very young years," he tells us in the *Journal*, "I had a gravity and stayedness of mind and spirit not usual in children; insomuch that when I saw old men behave lightly and wantonly toward each other I had a dislike thereof raised in my heart and said within myself, 'If ever I come to be a man, surely I shall not do so, nor be so wanton.' When I came to eleven years of age I knew pureness and righteousness; for while a child I was taught how to walk to be kept pure." His mother was pure and upright, "of the stock of martyrs," a deeply

religious woman, whose guiding hand and spirit did much to mould and shape the boy, but he himself implies throughout his vivid account of "how it was with me in my youth and how the work of the Lord was begun and gradually carried on in me," that the Lord taught him inwardly, guided him, restrained him and prepared him for his mission. He says that boys and "rude persons" laughed at him, made fun of him, as they would be sure to do, but he let them go their way, shunned the society of youth, kept to his "verily," used "few and savoury words" and impressed the serious-minded with his "innocency and honesty." It is not easy to parallel in any other religious autobiography Fox's freedom from conviction of sin, coupled at the same time with an intense sense of the awfulness of sin.

From his nineteenth year he reveals serious abnormal traits of mind. He was greatly depressed, unable to sleep, filled with despair, beset with temptations to sin, sent forth from home as a lonely wanderer at the spur of an inward prompting. He looked at himself and said, "Was I ever so before?" The world seemed "dark and under a chain of darkness." He was forlorn at home and afraid that he was doing wrong when he stayed away from home. Under the nervous strain and tension he had attacks of blindness,

failed to emit blood when the surgeon tried to bleed him, and he showed other marks of disorganization and unstable equilibrium. He sought help and guidance from priests and "tender people," but they could not "speak to his condition." One priest told his sorrows and troubles to servants and "milk-lasses," another advised him to marry, a third recommended tobacco and psalm singing. "Empty hollow casks," they all seemed to the distraught youth.

Gradually the nervous strain relaxed. He began to see gleams of light and to get "openings," which seemed to him to burst into his consciousness from God. Insights like these broke in upon him: It is not breeding at Oxford and Cambridge that qualifies for ministry; God does not dwell in temples but in hearts; true believers must be born of God. Finally upon his distress there came a flood of light and he heard an interior voice say, "There is one, even Jesus Christ, that can speak to thy condition." It seemed like a key put in his hand that unlocked all doors. He leaped in a flash to the fresh, first-hand discovery that Christ, whom the churches presented as dead, or as sitting in state in a far-away heaven, was alive and vitally present with him and in him; a revelation of God, so near, so real, that it was possible to know Him *experimentally*, and not merely as a fact of logic.

During this stage of his life Fox had many extraordinary experiences, such as mark the lives of mystics and prophets. His senses were hyperacute—he saw, heard, smelled and felt in unusual ways. Walking in the fields one day he *heard* the Lord say: "Thy name is written in the Lamb's book of life," and at another time: "Thou art in my love." "I *saw*," he says, "that there was an ocean of darkness and death; but an infinite ocean of light and love that flowed over the ocean of darkness. In that I *saw* the infinite love of God." Again he declares, "I *saw* the blood of Christ. I cried out among them: 'Do you not *see* the blood of Christ? *See* it in your hearts.' " Again he says that he was "much altered in countenance and person, as if my body had been new moulded or changed." When he prayed at Mansfield, "the Lord's power was so great that the house seemed to be shaken." At another time he felt himself carried in spirit "through the flaming sword into the paradise of God. All things were new; and all the creation gave unto me another *smell*." He felt himself brought to the state Adam was in before he fell and after that he believed himself to be brought to a steadfast state superior to the state of Adam's innocency, "even into a state in Christ Jesus that should never fall."

As his constructive experiences built up his

positive faith his entire condition of health improved. There was a marked increase in the organization of his constitution. His nerves became more stable, his temperament more hopeful, his body more robust. His depression had been due in large measure at least to the conviction, borne in upon him by his bitter experiences, that there was in the world no true apostolic Church, no conquering, overcoming faith, no evidence that Christ was still alive and working His divine work in men's lives. Now at length he had the positive assurance and evidence. There was one man who had found Him and had felt His presence, His power and His work, and he was that man. His own experience had convinced him that Christ was the "same yesterday, today and forever" and that what He had done in the first century He could do and was doing in the seventeenth. Those flashes of insight which came to him: There is a living God whose love is experimentally known; there is an ocean of light and love which flows over the darkness; there is a present Christ whose yoke gives rest; there is an experience which makes the whole creation have a new smell, released recreative energies within him and made a new and different man of him. It is not possible yet to explain just why instability of nervous constitution is a favorable

condition for the lofty experiences of the mystic and for the creative work of the genius, but such is the case. The border line between disintegrating hysteria and the vital energy of the prophet and genius has not yet been mapped. We only know that when the vision of God comes and when the creative insight arrives they tend to produce stability and they set free immense energies. Socrates, Paul, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Joan of Arc, Jacob Boehme and George Fox are striking instances of this release of energy, of the liberation of unexpected resources.

Fox had occasional temporary returns of his old trouble at later periods but for the most part he could now stand the world. His power of endurance was phenomenal. He was beaten with dog-whips, knocked down with fists and stones, brutally struck with pike staves, hard beset by mobs, incarcerated in pestilential jails, prisons, castles and "Doomsdale" dungeons, and yet he went straight forward with his mission, as though he had discovered some elixir which made him impervious to man's inhumanity. In his own fine phrase, he was "over it all." This shy, timorous, shrinking youth, fleeing society and courting solitude, became a leader of men, an organizer, a fearless advocate, a powerful speaker, a shrewd defender of his rights before judges and magistrates, a person

greatly beloved, one of whom William Penn could say, "I never saw him out of his place or not a match for every service or occasion." Cromwell felt at the first meeting with Fox that he was in the presence of a real man and he always showed a genuine respect for him. His jailers almost always were impressed with him and they were frequently convinced by him. Many battle-scarred soldiers who knew a man when they saw one became his loyal followers, and the students at Cambridge who tried in vain to pull him off his horse shouted, as they saw his radiant face, "See, he shines, he glistens." He wore a suit of leather because it was durable and well adapted to his rough out-door, horseback life, but his linen was always clean, he paid his way as he travelled, and he soon became the best-known man in England, especially in rural England, as John Wesley was to be a century later.

He was by no means free of faults and defects. He was not always inspired; he was often dull and tedious. Though usually very humble and tender, he yet sometimes was overconscious of his importance and he occasionally shared the tendency of his age to speak with an air of infallibility and finality. He felt undue satisfaction in the calamities which overtook his persecutors, though we should all admit that it is a very human trait.

But when these and other necessary discounts and subtractions are made he still stands forth a true specimen of an apostolic man and heroic reformer, absolutely sincere, honest, brave, uncompromising and with an eye single for the light of God in his soul. Once more William Penn's pithy sentence exactly hits the truth of him: "In all things he acquitted himself like a man, yea a strong man, a new and heavenly-minded man. A divine and a naturalist, and all of God Almighty's making."

George Fox's place in religious history is among the Spiritual Reformers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some of the most important of them were Denck, Franck, Schwenckfeld, Castellio, Coornhert, Boehme, Everard, Dell and Saltmarsh. They have been little studied and the importance of the movement inadequately grasped. The early leaders, who were contemporaries of Luther, were qualified scholars and men of noble aims. They were in sympathy with the mystic's type of religion. They were strongly influenced by Erasmus. They wanted a Church as little organized as possible in which each Christian could have a wide area of freedom and personality. They wished for a return to the way of life of the Galilean, the gospel of the sermon on the mount, the practice of the kingdom. They abhorred technical theology and hoped to realize a faith

born of experience and freshly fed and guided by the immediate presence of the Spirit. They were not much gifted with organizing craft and they were for the most part content to interpret their personal faith, their experience of the Spirit, their devotion to Christ, their membership in the invisible Church, and to "wait" for God to inaugurate the visible Church, if He would, through some new prophet who had not yet appeared. Out of this line of thought and hope finally emerged the groups of "Seekers" in Holland and England and kindred fellowships of eager but unsatisfied men and women.

Fox belongs, by disposition, bent, experience and mental preparation, with this interesting movement. There can be no question, I think, that he had seen and read some of their little books, which existed in large numbers and were being circulated and passed from hand to hand in his youth. The "Black Spread Eagle" Press was doing a risky but a very successful business in the publication of this new sort of spiritual literature, and busy translators were digging it out of German, Dutch and French originals. Fox must have met many of these "liberals," as he wandered about from county to county seeking for some one who could speak to his condition. The *Journal* gives many half clues but it supplies

provokingly little exact information until 1652, when Fox comes upon great bodies of prepared "Seekers" in the northern counties and later around Bristol and in other places. He *saw* them before he found them. "From the top of Pendle Hill," he says, "the Lord let me *see* in what places he had a great people to be gathered." "The Lord opened unto me and let me see a great people in white raiment by a river side, coming to the Lord." Here he found around Wensleydale and Sedbergh the nucleus of his new Society. Wherever his message spread and his truth took hold of people we discover signs of previous preparation for it. He imparted what men were seeking. He had what they wanted. He was the prophet they were waiting for. The God, the Christ, the Spirit inwardly revealed was the quick and powerful note of his preaching and he showed seekers how to find. "This is He, this is He, there is no other," cried Isaac Penington, the mystic and seeker, on some great convincing occasion, "this is He whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood; who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart, but I knew Him not distinctly, nor how to receive Him, or dwell with Him." "Some," he continues, "may desire to know what I have at last met with. I have met with my God; I have met with my Saviour; and

He hath not been present with me without His salvation; but *I have felt the healings drop upon my soul* from under His wings."

This passage from Penington is a good introduction to a brief study of Fox's central idea. He called his dominating principle the divine Seed, or inward Light. This plainly means that the divine Life can propagate itself in the life of a man, can come to birth in a human soul, so that in a real sense a man can become a temporal revealing organ of the Divine Nature. Fox's phrase is used throughout his writings without much definition and he seems to have taken it for granted that all his contemporaries knew what he meant. So, too, they did. The Spiritual Reformers had already made the idea familiar, for they proposed to pass over from the outward authority of Scripture, Church, creeds, rules, laws and ecclesiastics to the authority of the Spirit of God revealed within man. Fox of course arrived at his position not by reading, reflection and logical inference, but rather as he usually arrived, by a flash of insight, an experience, an "opening." He suddenly found God as a living presence within—*I knew Him experimentally*, he says. As his direct experiences multiplied and as he meditated upon them in the light of great passages of Scripture his faith took settled form, something like this: God and man are

essentially connected. Man's soul is a potential centre of revelation, it is "a candle of the Lord." There is something of God, which may be called a divine seed or a divine light, laid down in the nature and disposition of the soul. The soul is the most like God of anything in the universe and just as the wrist or the temple reveals the throbbing pulse-beat of the human heart, so the soul of man is where the moral and spiritual will of God palpitates and breaks through. Some persons are more sensitive to the pulse of the divine heart than others are. The great eternal revelations in Scripture have come through those men who possessed extraordinary nearness to God and who let His will come through with the least hindrance, but revelation is not a matter of date or geography. Man is equally equipped for two worlds, with special senses for the outside world and with spiritual faculties for correspondence with the inside world. The outside world may and often does become all-absorbing and it can so completely occupy and dominate a person that he may

"Forget the glories he hath known
And that imperial palace whence he came,"

but the fact remains that the realm of the Spirit is always near and the soul of man is always a

possible organ of the life of God. Fox belongs obviously enough in the circle of the mystics and those who responded to his proclamation were usually of this same mystical type. He worked out no metaphysical basis for his faith and he was innocent of psychology, but he kept close to the well-marked path of his own illuminating experience and it carried him forward with a pretty sure tread. There was bound however to be a different situation when the high-tide experience waned and when the inward Light became a dry, abstract theory as it did. In the naïve and unquestioning stage, while the throbbing pulse could be felt, there was little trouble, but the explosive controversies of a later period were always latent in the famous phrase. Even now the only way to appreciate fully what Fox meant two hundred and fifty years ago is to feel once more the invading Life of God and to be flooded with the vital energies of the Living Spirit. There is no magic in a word, there is no alchemy in a phrase. The bones of a prophet are a poor substitute for his living spirit. We cannot conquer now with the slogan of an ancient battle. If we want to prove that Fox really struck a jet of living water, we ourselves must tap that same fountain.

One of the outstanding features of the Christianity of George Fox was his revolt from the

theological systems and the ecclesiastical forms of his time. As a religious revolutionist he was more extreme than Luther. He took the farthest possible logical step toward a complete reformation. Luther remained entrenched in a conservative theological position, which was quite inconsistent with his battle-idea, and the protestant tendency for the century following Luther had been in the direction of hardening doctrine into a rigid system and of making it essential to salvation. In fact doctrine became far more important than it had been before the Reformation. Preaching in Fox's youth was in the main a tedious exposition of doctrines and the Fenny Drayton youth had more than enough of it from the Reverend Nathaniel Stephens. From the beginning of his mission he set forth an untheological type of Christianity. He felt as much repugnance for doctrines and dogmas as Luther did for indulgences and for masses. It seemed to him that Christianity had become an elaborate set of theories, to be discussed and debated. He called these constructions "notions," and, like Boehme before him, he ridiculed the whole undertaking as a new method of "Babel-building," an attempt to climb up to God on a tower built of texts and doctrines. He saw even in his youth how easy it was to hold and affirm all the doctrines in the Orthodox archives and yet

to be the width of the sky from the kingdom of God. There seemed to him to be no practical connection between believing dogmas and being a follower of Christ; between holding a creed and living a holy life. In fact it was fatally easy to make the former a substitute for the latter. He resolved therefore to bend all his energies to the real business of restoring the Christianity of the gospel, of producing a religion of life and practice —and he refused the fatal substitute.

For him salvation was not believing a doctrine of the atonement; it was a living, triumphant deliverance from sin and the love of it, and the formation of a new and Christlike nature and spirit within. Instead of mystifying and confusing the mind with logical complications about the Trinity, he focussed his attention on the important business of getting an effective *experience* of God, finding Him revealed as a loving Father, a forgiving, sacrificing Christ, and as an inward, invisible, transforming, spiritual presence. Instead of constructing a dogmatic theory about the Scriptures he filled his life with their truth, he saturated himself with their message and spirit, and he strove faithfully to translate them back into their original language, the language of life.

He took the same effective attitude toward the ecclesiastical structure, with its sacerdotalism and

its ritual. It seemed to him an overelaborate, man-made construction, charged with controversial explosives. He proposed to return as far as possible to the simple basis of the New Testament, to put life and fellowship in the place of system and organization. The sacraments seemed to him to be a subject of endless contention. They had accumulated around themselves a vast amount of tradition and superstition and, like other sacred symbols, they had too often been made substitutes for the realities which they professed to symbolize. Fox proposed to translate them back into their original meaning as inward and living realities. Baptism and communion should be, he felt, genuine spiritual *operations*, not something put on or put into the body, but a vital process within the soul. He felt no interest in an ordination by external hands, but he was immensely interested in the ordination of the piercéd hands, the transmission of divine unction by the inward work of the Spirit.

His Christianity was fundamentally lay-religion, as beyond question Christ's was. In Fox's conception religion is wholly a matter of experience, a vital process, a spiritual relationship—an attitude and spirit. Pious schemes, devices, systems, remain forever just what they are — pious schemes devices, systems. They shift no levels, they raise

no dead, they alter in no way the external nature of things. Holding an official position, belonging to a so-called sacred order, going through with an ancient ceremony effects no miracle. A man is what he is. Asking him to say something, to think something, to perform some act will furnish him with no medicinal balm for his soul. He must find a new source of life, a new dynamic, a new spring of power, a new inward resource. He must undergo a new creation and become a new person. He must come into new relation with God and into new fellowship with men. This process, this power, this creation, this relationship, this life, is Christianity. It is not a creed, it is not a scheme, it is not an organization; it is a life. With all this in mind, George Fox undertook as far as possible to let the new life, which he had found for himself and into which he had brought many others, take its own free and untrammelled course of development. He shunned rigid moulds, crystallized forms and static systems. He had felt the Spirit blowing as it listed and he wanted the new instrument of the Spirit to be as sensitive and responsive to that Spirit as the hand of a man is to the man's will. For that reason he refused to head a new sect, or to start a new denomination, or to begin a new church. He would not build up an organization of any kind. He left the life free and fluid

to shape itself. At first his movement remained a simple fellowship, the members of which called themselves "Children of the Light," somewhat as the first Christians called themselves "those of the Way." Gradually and almost unconsciously they began to call themselves "Friends," and the whole body was named "the Society of Friends," the term "Society" being used as we should now use the word fellowship or group, a social organism rather than a systematic organization. Fox always thought of the little body of Friends as "the seed of God," a little fellowship of men and women through whom the life of God was breaking forth and destined to become an ever-increasing vital power. The world at large gave them in sport the name of "Quakers," because they literally "quaked," that is, they were moved with emotion and trembled in their meetings and especially when they prayed. William Penn says of Fox: "The most awful, living reverent frame, I must say, was his in prayer," and the people, too, seemed sometimes to feel the place *shake* when he prayed, because without doubt he himself first shook and trembled.

This Society, which emerged from the preaching and personal leadership of Fox, had no clergy, no "officials," in the technical sense, no rule of faith and doctrine, no outward sacraments, no

sacred order of procedure, no infallibilities. The meetings for worship, around which the whole movement centred as a temple does around a holy of holies, usually began with reverent hush and silent communion, for no one dared or cared to speak until he had first listened and heard. The whole conception of worship rested upon a sublime faith in the real presence, which means that it is not necessary to go somewhere to find God, nor to call upon Him to come down hither from a remote heaven, but only necessary to attain a tender, sensitive, palpitant, responsive state of soul. He is not farther away from the soul than the radio undulations are from the instrument that receives the music, but the instrument receives only that for which it is "keyed." The music of a hundred cities sweeps the air but only one concert of one city reports itself at a time through the vibrant box. Living communion, the inflow of the healing forces and the vital energy of the divine Life, and a joyous human response to it formed the essential feature of the meeting. Public speaking and prayer were free and spontaneous, though it was expected that no one would break the silence unless some word of life, message of truth, communication of comfort and edification, or supplication, were impressively laid upon the mind of the speaker. There

was a certain awe about it which acted as a wholesome restraint and the sensitive group was quick to feel whether the message was "in the life" or "out of the life," and very soon the speaker himself would know, too. It was an interesting experiment in universal priesthood and on the whole a fairly successful attempt to "crown and mitre" the entire membership.

The business affairs of the Society, too, including the care of those who suffered persecution, as well as of those who were in want, and the extensive work for the propagation of their truth, the building of new meetings, the publication of literature, were managed in the most democratic fashion, each question, each problem, being settled by the unified corporate judgment of the group, which they called "the sense of the meeting," gathered up and expressed by the clerk in a minute of decision. This simple method of course expanded and adapted itself to the growing needs and complex situations, as the Society enlarged, but it always remained democratic in principle and was kept adjustable to new occasions and to new issues.

In spite of the fact that George Fox was a mystic and that he laid so much stress on the inward way, he was nevertheless of all things a man of action and concerned with the practical

tasks of life. His religion was fully as much outward as it was inward. His divine Light was a principle of unity. It bound into one whole the two diverse attitudes of his nature and he was following his bent alike when he sat on a haystack unmoved for three hours in silence and when he rode through the English counties, or the American forests, preaching and creating meetings. From the first his religion took a practical turn. He did not think of religion primarily as a way to win a peaceful refuge in the world beyond. Having dropped his burdens of theology as Bunyan did his burden of sin, he lost at the same time the habit of considering salvation as a title to a mansion in heaven. It became for him at once a way of living in the world now, a program for the actual pilgrimage we are engaged in. Fox seldom uses the word through which Christ expressed his central program — the kingdom of God — but in a rough and general way its ideals are his ideals. He wants God's will done on earth, where conditions are difficult, as it is now done in heaven, where conditions are easy. One of Fox's apostolic men, Francis Howgil, bears this fine testimony: "We often said to one another, with great joy of heart, 'What? Is the kingdom of God come to be with men?' "

For the present age the most important thing

about Fox's mission in the world is not his theory but his practical way of life. Truth for him was always something a man can not only think but be. To discover a truth involves the apostolic task of going out and doing it. Fox, like St. Francis and like their greater Master of Galilee, believed absolutely in the conquering power of faith and love. Swinging away as he did from the prevailing theories of human depravity he went far over to the other extreme and took a strikingly optimistic view of man. Set him free from tyranny and oppression, liberate him from false theories of life, draw out his potential capacities by a true education, awaken him to a consciousness of God within him, and there are no limits to his spiritual possibilities. The one great method of ending the old way of life and inaugurating the new is the practice of love. Act with honesty and sincerity under all circumstances, meet everybody with an understanding mind as well as with trust and confidence, reveal a spirit of spontaneous and unfeigned love and there will prove to be pretty nearly nothing in the world that will successfully resist that impact.

Notwithstanding those early years of solitude and withdrawal Fox was by disposition a social-minded man. He *saw* and *felt* wrong social conditions as unerringly as he saw and felt the nearness

of God. Before he had even set forth to preach his message of the Light he had an impression that he ought to go to the Justices and tell them to consider the condition of servants and to see to it that these servants had fair wages. He was always concerned for toilers. He was deeply distressed by the excessive drinking in taverns. He was shocked as soon as he saw the way men and women lived in jails and prisons. He revolted absolutely from the whole barbarity and wreckage of war. It is useless to expect that he would by miraculous insight have the sound principles of sociology which our scientific age is slowly building up. The important fact is that again and again he rightly diagnosed the trouble and put his finger on the diseased spot. With a swift intuition he pronounced against evil customs which had gone unchallenged for centuries and with the same sure insight he suggested a new way of action. He had, as I have said, a great stock of trust and confidence in man. His foundation theory of man, as a being possessed of something of God, taught from within by direct illumination, made him hopeful and persistently expectant. He saw in Negroes and Indians, in the unfavored races everywhere, moral and spiritual possibilities which others had hardly suspected. He had an unlimited faith in education and he was an

unceasing advocate of it. He wanted boys and girls to study "everything civil and useful in creation."

Even his most odd and bizarre convictions and peculiarities had reference to his passion for a better social order and for a truer relationship. The use of "thee" and "thou" had its origin with him in a determination to treat all men alike. It was a badge of human equality — He would not say "thou" to the laborer and "you" to the magnate. As in his boyhood use of "verily," so here, he proposed to make language a medium of truth and sincerity. His lips should utter only what his heart and mind endorsed. If formal etiquette expected him to say to a man what he very well knew was not true, then he resolved to have nothing more to do with formal etiquette till the end of the world! Some of his points of social reform are trivial and hair-splitting, no doubt. He sometimes makes a mountain out of an ant-hill. But his basic principle was a high and significant one. Truth and sincerity were the two guardian angels who attended Fox's steps. He was a fallible man, like the rest of us, and he was not always wise, but this can be said: He minded the Light in his soul and he *did* what he dared to dream of.

He attacked the most gigantic problems in the

same spirit in which men have since set forth to conquer the poles of the earth or to climb Everest. He had a dash of that same divine folly which was raised to such a height in "God's little fool" of Assisi. He took quite literally the saying that there are no mountains which can successfully resist a well-grounded faith, even though it may be only of the mustard-seed size. War had always existed. It was as old as fear and hate. It was due to the thrust of immemorial instincts. And men said then, as was said two thousand years before: "What has been is what shall be." No, said Fox, war is wrong, it is immoral, it is inhuman and it shall not be. There is a spirit which conquers it and abolishes it, and I propose to incarnate that spirit and to practice it and to call others to that way of life until we girdle the world with men and women who live in "that life and power which does away with the occasion for all war!" "The seed of God reigns, and is atop of the Devil and all his works."

In the same temper he set himself against the existing methods of dealing with crime. He knew by an inevitable intuition that capital punishment was wrong. He was convinced that the prisons where men and women were supposed to be "corrected" were inhuman instruments. He was certain that

the entire method of correction was on the wrong basis and defeated itself. But all these customs were as fixed as the Andes or the Himalayas. They were all built on human instincts. Again people said: "What has been done is what shall be done." But once more this simple knight of God rode forth with no other strength than his faith that *what is eternally right can in the end be done.* He did not live to see the new world which his faith forecast. We do not altogether see it yet, after the flow of three centuries. But he has pretty well demonstrated the truth of his famous saying that "one man raised by God's power to stand and live in the same spirit the prophets and apostles were in can shake the country for ten miles around" — yes, for ten thousand miles, and for three centuries. He has made it easier for us to believe in the triumph of ideals and he has verified the fact that the way of faith and love is a real way to the achievement of good ends; and it may even turn out to be the only way. His impact on the world has been what he would have wished it to be, slow and gradual, the gentle influence of spiritual forces. He has convinced many and he still convinces some that "the ocean of Light and Love flows over the ocean of darkness," and that in spite of all the forces of evil "the seed of God reigns." He was, indeed "a

heavenly-minded man," and after his long, hard, honest fight for truth and goodness, he had some right to speak those last dying words of his: "I am clear, I am fully clear."

CHRONOLOGY OF GEORGE FOX

1624. Birth of George Fox in July.
1640. Long Parliament.
1642. Beginning of Civil War.
1643. Fox starts on his quest.
1647. Begins preaching.
1649. Execution of Charles I. First imprisonment of Fox.
1652. Pendle Hill experience. Discovery of Seeker groups.
1658. Death of Cromwell.
1660. Restoration.
1664. First Conventicle Act.
1669. Fox marries Margaret Fell.
1670. Second Conventicle Act.
1671–73. Fox visits America.
1673–75. Last imprisonment (the eighth) at Worcester, including transmissions to London.
1677. Fox visits Holland and Germany.
1682. William Penn founds Pennsylvania.
1685. Death of Charles II and accession of James II.
1688. Accession of William and Mary.
1689. Toleration Act.
1691. Death of Fox, January 13.
1702. Death of Margaret Fox.

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